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RETHINKING THE «SMALL WORLDS» OF TENTH-CENTURY GALICIA*

Repensando los «pequeños mundos» de la Galicia del siglo X

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to examine the internal dynamics of the village world of tenth-century Galicia by means of a close analysis of documents from the cartulary of Celanova. It seeks to shed light on the dynamism of peasant social experience by examining the horizontal bonds that existed among villagers and their neighbours. This article attempts to offer an alternative to readings which analyses peasantries simply in order to demonstrate their progressive subjection. In place of the teleology implicit in this interpretation, this article suggests that by recognizing that some peasants actively courted the assistance and opportunities for business that their neighbours and local monastic institutions provided, we can better appreciate the complexity of peasant social experience.

Keywords: Peasants. Social Relations. Land Market. Horizontal Bonds. Feudal Society.

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RESUMEN: Este artículo pretende examinar la dinámica interna del mundo aldeano en la Galicia del siglo x mediante un análisis profundo de los documentos del cartulario de Celanova. Se busca alumbrar el dinamismo de la experiencia social campesina a través del examen de los vínculos horizontales que enlazaban a los aldeanos y a sus vecinos. Este trabajo trata de ofrecer una alternativa a aquellas lecturas que analizan al campesinado simplemente para demostrar su progresiva sujeción. En vez de esa teleología implícita en dicha interpretación, se sugiere que puede apreciarse mejor la complejidad de la experiencia social campesina gracias al reconocimiento de que algunos campesinos cortejaron activamente la asistencia y oportunidades que les ofrecían sus vecinos y las instituciones monásticas locales.

Palabras clave: Campesinos. Relaciones sociales. Mercado de tierras. Vínculos horizontales. Sociedad feudal.

SUMARIO: 0 Introduction. 1 Economic realities within the village world. 2 Social structures within the village world. 3 Rabal: the dynamics of the land market.

*Hasta el periodo contemporáneo
la vida de los humildes no ha sido material historiable¹.*

0 INTRODUCTION

The pioneering studies of several eminent Spanish medievalists working since the 1970s have by now conclusively demonstrated that Díaz del Moral's fabled maxim regarding the possibility of writing the history of the pre-twentieth-century *campesinado*, was not, in actual fact, wholly true². Had he looked back to the early Middle Ages with a keener eye when writing his otherwise masterful account of the pre-modern roots of the Spanish peasantry, Díaz del Moral may indeed have realized that Spain is, on the contrary, particularly blessed with abundant material when it comes to the provision of information regarding the peasantry and the rural milieu between 800 and 1000; admittedly, this is information transmitted via documents constructed to reflect and preserve elite interests, but peasant actors remain central to the narratives recorded in many such documents, and are sometimes the principal protagonists. This protagonism, however, was for too long ignored. The rural poor, the disenfranchised, although the majority until well into

¹ DÍAZ DEL MORAL, J. *Historia de las agitaciones campesinas andaluzas*. Madrid, 1973⁷, p. 32.

² I cannot be exhaustive here. Three texts I have found particularly stimulating are: GARCÍA DE CORTÁZAR, J. Á. and Díez HERRERA, C. *La formación de la sociedad-hispano cristiana del Cantábrico al Ebro en los siglos VIII al XI. Planteamiento de una hipótesis y análisis del caso de Liébana, Asturias de Santillana y Trasmiera*. Santander, 1982; PASTOR, R. *Resistencias y luchas campesinas en la época del crecimiento y consolidación de la formación feudal: Castilla y León, siglos X-XIII*. Madrid, 1980; and ÁLVAREZ BORGE, I. (ed.). *Comunidades locales y poderes feudales*. La Rioja, 2001. These developments have been excellently chronicled by GARCÍA DE CORTÁZAR, J. Á. and MARTÍNEZ SOPENA, P. «Los estudios sobre historia rural de la sociedad medieval hispanocristiana». In ALFONSO, I. (ed.). *La Historia Rural de las sociedades medievales europeas*. Valencia, 2008, pp. 97-143.

the twentieth century, were simply not considered appropriate subjects for historical analysis until relatively recently, and it is this unfortunate scenario, rather than the total absence of *material historiabile*, that best explains their historiographical subjection to kings, councils and battles. These days, however, documents from monastic cartularies are routinely invoked as (imperfect) windows onto village communities peopled almost entirely by peasants and artisans; windows which allow us to glimpse aspects of daily life and thereby better understand what Wendy Davies has characterized as the «small worlds» of medieval Europe³.

Those interested in trying to understand these small worlds, in a Spanish historiographical context, have built upon the substantial foundations left to them by earlier scholars whose studies bore the hallmark of the rigorous training they underwent in legal history (and related instrumental disciplines such as diplomatic studies), at a time when near-contemporary events were prompting many intellectuals to ask essentialist questions about the nature of Spanish historical development⁴. Many of the historians of this earlier vintage had looked to explain the history of medieval Spain through that of its institutions, and in so doing settled upon the use of charter material and legal codes (from the *Lex Visigothorum* through to the *Partidas*) as instruments with which to demonstrate the «reality» of reconquest, and to affirm the unity of a Castile-dominated peninsula. These currents of thought were challenged, most famously, by Barbero and Vigil, who posited the indigenous socio-structural origins of the Asturians, and proposed a rather different path to the «feudalism» of the central Middle Ages, effectively reintroducing the concept of a feudal social and political order to Spanish academic discussion in the process⁵. This search for a path to a feudal world characterized by inbuilt structural opposition between lords and peasants precipitated the development of numerous new ways of approaching the history of the peasantry, ranging from that (by now) classic staple of Spanish scholarship, the study of monastic lordship over a given territory, to investigations centred upon *la ordenación social del espacio*⁶. In their wake came studies of peasant institutions at the level of the village world (such as *concordias*), and, in more recent

³ DAVIES, W. *Small Worlds: the village community in early medieval Brittany*. London, 1988.

⁴ Most famously, SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ, C. *España, un enigma histórico*. Buenos Aires, 1956, 2 vols.; and *Despoblación y repoblación del Valle del Duero*. Buenos Aires, 1966. Also, for his influence, and for further evidence of this approach, GRASSOTTI, H. *Las instituciones feudo-vasalláticas en León y Castilla*. Spoleto, 1969. The best short discussion of the influence of this school can be found in ESCALONA MONGE, J. *Sociedad y territorio en la Alta Edad Media castellana: la formación del alfoz de Lara*. Oxford, 2002. pp. 3-13. For the 'contemporary events' I mention above, that is, the disaster of 1898 and the outpouring of intellectual introspection it is said to have prompted, see MILLÁN Y GARCÍA-VARELA, J. «El desastre del 98 i la crisi social de l'Estat liberal espanyol». *Pasado y Memoria: Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 2002, vol. 1, pp. 183-196.

⁵ BARBERO, A. and VÍGIL, M. *Sobre los orígenes sociales de la Reconquista*. Barcelona, 1974 and *La formación del Feudalismo en la Península Ibérica*. Barcelona, 1978.

⁶ Classic studies of monastic lordship include: GARCÍA DE CORTÁZAR, J. Á. *El dominio del monasterio de San Millán de la Cogolla (siglos X a XIII)*. Salamanca, 1969; MÍNGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ, J. M.^a. *El dominio del monasterio de Sabagún en el siglo X: paisajes agrarios, producción y expansión económica*. Salamanca, 1980; and PALLARES MÉNDEZ, M.^a C. *El monasterio de Sobrado: un ejemplo de protagonismo monástico en la Galicia medieval*. La Coruña, 1979. The notion of the organisation of space has been associated above all with the work of García de Cortázar, and given that this informs forty years' worth of studies, I shall not cite them here.

times, detailed investigations of supra-local territories which lay emphasis on «dynamic continuity» rather than depopulation⁷.

In an article of this length, a historiographical characterization such as this must necessarily be schematic; nonetheless, the point remains that the peasantry as a social group has not wanted for attention in Spanish historical writing since peasant studies were rescued from the margins of academic history in the 1960s. Indeed, in more recent times some of the more innovative practitioners of rural history have taken inspiration from new advances in our understanding of settlement structures brought about by archaeological interventions, with the result that we can now say without fear of exaggeration that the *campesinado* lies at the heart of some very innovative research⁸. However, the vast majority of scholarly investigation on rural society, in one way or another, has been situated within an overarching conceptual framework of «feudal transformation» and has very readily accepted its core theoretical premises. Charters have thus been mined in order to furnish evidence of a gradual breakdown in the social fabric at some stage from 900 to 1100, a process which is thought to have seen private interest eclipse the public sphere of political action, and the condition of peasantries worsen in the absence of central structures and institutions which at least theoretically provided them with some protection⁹. Much recent discussion has focussed on the emergence of individuals who amassed significant landed assets at the expense of peasantries —these were counts or minor aristocrats, acting ever more independently of the shackles of the supposedly (and implicitly) restraining influence of public power¹⁰.

It is striking, however, that these investigations have tended to overlook «lived peasant experience» in favour of theoretical discussions about the diffusion of power within society as a whole —often in ways which do not discuss the conceptual implications of «power» in an early medieval context, but *nonetheless* accept that power relations were broadly «top-down» in early medieval society¹¹. There have been

⁷ ESCALONA MONGE, *Sociedad y territorio en la Alta Edad Media castellana*; MARTÍN VISO, I. *Poblamiento y estructuras sociales en el norte de la Península Ibérica: siglos VI-XIII*. Salamanca, 2000; clearly influential for these scholars has been WICKHAM, Ch. «The Other Transition. From the Ancient World to Feudalism». *Past and Present*, 1984, vol. 103:1, pp. 3-36. The best introduction to trends in the historiography of peasant studies is that of ESCALONA MONGE, J. «The early Castilian peasantry. An archaeological turn?». *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 2009, vol. 1:2, pp. 119-145.

⁸ Leading this wave have been QUIRÓS CASTILLO, J. A. and VIGIL-ESCALERA, A. «Networks of peasant villages between Toledo and Velegia Alabense, Northwestern Spain (v-xth Centuries)». *Archeologia Medievale*, 2006, vol. XXXIII, pp. 79-128.

⁹ What protection may have meant is under-explored in early medieval Spanish scholarship. For a good recent starting point, see ROLLASON, D. and LAMBERT, T. *Peace and Protection in the Middle Ages*. Durham, 2009.

¹⁰ I have recently taken issue with the way in which public power was assumed to have worked in early medieval Spain, and the fact that such assumptions rest upon accepting its restraining influence, in PORTASS, R. «The Contours and Contexts of Public Power in the Tenth-Century Liébana». *Journal of Medieval History*, 2012, vol. 36:4, pp. 389-407.

¹¹ The bibliography is vast for the workings of power; for English-language considerations on this topic that I have found particularly useful, see BERKHOFER III, R.; COOPER, A. and KOSTO, A (eds.). *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe, 950-1350*. Ashgate, 2005; WICKHAM, Ch. *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History*. London, 1994; DAVIES, W. and FOURACRE, P. (eds.). *Property and Power in the early Middle Ages*. Cambridge, 1995; and MANN, M. *The Sources of Social Power. A history of power from the beginning to AD 1760*. Cambridge, 1986, vol. 1, chs. 1, 12 and 13.

exceptions¹². Carlos Estepa Díez's work has alerted us to the various manifestations and modalities of lordly power and its exercise, and Wendy Davies has added to this in recent years, but this trend has yet to impel large numbers of scholars to draw attention to these distinctions within broader studies of feudal transformation¹³. Social relations, in fact, where they have been treated, have mostly been the focus of scholars influenced by Marxist or at least *marxisant* ideologies and class struggle has been the ideological umbrella under which they have sheltered¹⁴. And although this conviction has driven some truly excellent work on peasant communities, it risks marginalising aspects of peasant experience that do not fit easily within this schema. Moreover, a problem we need to confront as historians is that villagers and their concerns were almost entirely beholden, within the confines of the dominant framework, to the whims of lords; consequently, what village inhabitants did when they were not involved in «resistencia o luchas» has been treated as marginal, or has simply failed to rouse much of a response¹⁵.

In more general terms, little attempt has been made to question the logic of lord-peasant relationships outside of frameworks which focus solely on conflict and exploitation, in spite of the fact that such an approach risks simplifying the complexity of early medieval society, and that studies which have examined the horizontal ties of the peasant world have raised interesting implications for community bonds, cohesion and mobility¹⁶. Moreover, one does not need to be naïve about the essential unfairness and exploitation of many basic features of this world to ponder whether lords must have been, on occasion, a force for social cohesion, and their patronage actively sought by poorer elements of society. Thus, an attempt to address social relations in tenth-century Galicia free of this *a priori* conflictive model informs a significant part of my analysis in

¹² To cite one of the better examples, see the introductory remarks of ÁLVAREZ BORGE, I. *Poder y relaciones sociales en Castilla en la Edad Media*. Salamanca, 1996, pp. 21-26.

¹³ ESTEPA DÍEZ, C. «En torno a propiedad dominical, dominio señorial, y señorío jurisdiccional». In SER QUIJANO, G. del and MARTÍN VISO, I. (eds.). *Espacios de poder y formas sociales en la Edad Media: estudios dedicados a Ángel Barrios*. Salamanca, 2007, pp. 67-76; DAVIES, W. «Lordship and Community: northern Spain on the eve of the year 1000». In DYER, Ch.; COSS, P. and WICKHAM, Ch. (eds.). *Rodney Hilton's Middle Ages*. Cambridge, 2007, pp. 18-33.

¹⁴ PASTOR, *Resistencia y luchas campesinas*, p. 6: «son dos las clases principales y antagónicas. La clase de poder, la feudal, y la clase dependiente».

¹⁵ ESCALONA MONGE has noted that «Settlement and territorial control, in particular, seem to have been more central subjects than peasants themselves», in «The early Castilian peasantry», p. 123.

¹⁶ In a non-Castilian language context, one thinks of INNES, M. *State and Society in the early Middle Ages: the middle Rhine Valley, 400-1000*. Cambridge, 2000; DAVIES, *Small Worlds*; and TO FIGUERAS, L. *Familia i hereu a la Catalunya Nord-oriental (segles X a XII)*. Barcelona, 1997, chs. 1-3. FELLER, L. *La fortune de Karol: marché de la terre et liens personnels dans les Abruzzes au haut Moyen Âge*. Rome, 2005, demonstrates the complexity of the land market, peasant involvement, motives and contexts perhaps better than any other work thus far. García de Cortázar and Martínez Sopena acknowledge this less straitjacketed approach to the rural world («Los estudios sobre historia rural», pp. 114-117) but it remains undeniable that it has not featured at the forefront of Spanish research beyond investigations into 'dispute settlement' (which easily lends themselves to a concentration on 'vertical' social relations anyway). Italian historiography, some of it for a later period, has taken an interest in this approach, for which, see the overview provided by PROVERO, L. «Cuarenta años de historia rural del medioevo italiano». In ALFONSO, *La historia rural*, pp. 145-174, and his *L'Italia dei poteri locali*. Roma, 1998, esp. ch. 6.

what follows; this is necessary because to focus exclusively on antagonistic social relations is to do the dynamism, ingenuity and humanity of the *campesinado* a disservice. An examination of this sort also helps us to test whether the paradigm of a hard-pressed peasantry forced into ever greater dependence remains a useful way of broaching the pre-millennial history of feudal transformation, given that micro-regional studies across Europe appear to suggest that the fluid scope of peasant action was mediated and structured by informal groups of friends, family and neighbours quite as much as it was by lords empowered with new mechanisms of coercion¹⁷.

I ECONOMIC REALITIES WITHIN THE VILLAGE WORLD

In this article my efforts to construct «a rural sociology of people dealing with other people» will focus on, but will not be restricted to, the village of Rabal¹⁸. Thirty-two charters from the years 956 to 997 allow us to examine village life in Rabal in ways which documentary scarcity makes impossible for earlier periods and other areas; we can therefore appreciate aspects of the social dynamics that characterized this small world by focussing on the tensions that governed social interaction, both amongst villagers, and between villagers and representatives from Celanova, the local monastery that recorded and archived the transactions, mostly in land, that it conducted with peasants¹⁹. Although we cannot do this sort of detailed work for all Galician villages in the tenth century, we can assume from the similarities that the Rabal charters share with the sorts of details recorded in transactions from other, less well documented villages, that it can be used as a good approximate guide to village life in southern Galicia in our period²⁰. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that Rabal has already attracted the attention of historians. However, consideration thus far has centred on the layout of the village, its internal spatial organization, and continuities of settlement, rather than on social relations *per se*²¹. In conjunction with Rabal, the village of Bobadela, which is especially

¹⁷ DAVIES, *Small Worlds*, passim; INNES, *State and Society*; and WICKHAM, Ch. *The mountains and the city: the Tuscan Apennines in the early Middle Ages*. Oxford, 1988.

¹⁸ For an overview of this sort of approach in a pan-European context, see WICKHAM, Ch. «Rural society in Carolingian Europe». *New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. II (700-900)*. Cambridge, 1995, pp. 510-537, at p. 511.

¹⁹ There is a huge bibliography on charters which I cannot discuss here; recent analyses I have found very useful are RIO, A. *Legal Practice and the Written Word in the Early Middle Ages*. Cambridge, 2009, pp. 11-20; DAVIES, W. *Acts of Giving: individual, community and Church in tenth-century Christian Spain*. Oxford, 2007; HIEDECKER, K. (ed.). *Charters and the Use of the Written Word in Medieval Society*. Turnhout, 2000. On Celanova's archive, see GALLEGO, O. *El archivo del monasterio de Celanova*. Madrid, 1991. For the charters, SÁEZ, E. and SÁEZ, C. (eds.). *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Celanova (842-1230)*. Alcalá de Henares, 1996, 2000, 2006, 3 vols., cited as Cel1, Cel2, etc.

²⁰ These shared details include, for example, the preponderance of mixed farming and viticulture realized pretty much everywhere that we have documented peasant transaction in tenth-century Galicia.

²¹ PALLARES MÉNDEZ, M.^a C. *Ilduara, una aristócrata del siglo X*. La Coruña, 1998, pp. 38-48; PORTELA SILVA, E. and PALLARES MÉNDEZ, M.^a C. «La villa por dentro. Testimonios galaicos de los siglos X y XI». *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 1998, vol. 16, pp. 13-43. Another useful study is SÁNCHEZ PARDO, J. C. «Estrategias territoriales de un poder monástico en la Galicia medieval: Celanova (siglos X-XII)». *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 2010, vol. 28, pp. 155-178.

well documented in the eleventh century, has also been subjected to critical scrutiny, but conclusions have been restricted to the confirmation of a series of patterns which have been more broadly delineated across the northern peninsula, and epitomized by «ventas forzadas», «capacidad coercitiva» y «poder sensorial»²². Framed this way, the perspective of the monastic institution is privileged over that of the peasantry (simply because this perspective fits an extant theoretical model which is itself built to a large extent on a failure to decode, and make allowances for, the nature of the documentation), with the result that peasants are studied only with the objective of demonstrating the progressive loss of peasant autonomy; as a starting point, this is an approach which seems to me to restrict the possibilities of debate *ab initio*²³.

However, the extent to which economic transactions recorded in charters were socially embedded in the texture of village life, rather than contingent solely upon pressures exerted by local powers, bears some consideration. Rabal allows us to gain an insight into this particular, as do other villages too, precisely because charters appear to show peasants acting in ways which do not fit very neatly with the prevailing paradigm that frames investigations of lord-peasant relations in Spanish historical writing²⁴. One such example has to do with the range of economic and social conditions that characterized the village community²⁵. Pallares and Portela have convincingly demonstrated that the Galician *villa* of the early Middle Ages was subject to a degree of internal organization, dependent on the productive and habitational requirements of the community, which presupposed a population of variable resources and status²⁶. For this reason we need to accept that peasants were not always settled producers who cultivated for subsistence; those who played a role in the labour process but clearly owned several plots within (and sometimes

²² ANDRADE CERNADAS, J. M. *El monacato benedictino y la sociedad de la Galicia medieval (siglos X al XIII)*. La Coruña, 1997, for whom, Celanova «es, en otras palabras, una gran institución señorial que va a funcionar como el primer agente de feudalización en su ámbito regional más inmediato, que tiene como primeras víctimas a los campesinos pequeños propietarios», p. 77. Broadly similar in approach is, CARZOLIO DE ROSSI, M.^a I. «La constitución y organización de un dominio monástico benedictino: Celanova (s. X-XI)». *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 1991, vol. 73, pp. 5-74.

²³ This calls to mind Chris Dyer's observation that «Historians of poverty give more attention to the rich than they do the poor», in DYER, Ch. «The Experience of Being Poor in Late Medieval England». In SCOTT, A. *Experiences of Poverty in Late Medieval and Early Modern England and France*. Ashgate, 2012, pp. 19-39, at p. 19.

²⁴ Typical of the over-generalized approach I take issue with here is the study of LÓPEZ QUIROGA, J.; BENITO DÍEZ, L. and CATALÁN RAMOS, R. «*Monasteria et territoria* en la Galicia interior en torno al año mil. El monasterio de San Salvador de Celanova». In LÓPEZ QUIROGA, J.; MARTÍNEZ TEJERA, A. and MORÍN DE PABLOS, J. (eds.). *Monasteria et territoria. Elites, edilicia y territorio en el Mediterráneo medieval (siglos V-XI)*. Oxford, 2007, pp. 409-428. These authors analyse the spatial expansion of the monastery's influence, and not the contents of the documents which describe its interaction with local society, but claim nevertheless (p. 41) that: «Durante los siglos X y XI el monasterio de Celanova no dejará de aumentar su patrimonio territorial mediante aparentes donaciones que, sin embargo, esconden bajo esta ficción jurídica la enorme presión que dicha entidad ejerce».

²⁵ I am aware of the endless terminological debate surrounding the term *villa* and its correspondence (or not) to terms such as village, or aldea. However, I am happy to use the term 'village' here and I use it to refer to the basic unit of territorial and social organization of tenth-century southern Galicia described in the documents as *villae*, which were themselves composed of estates of varying size sometimes also called *villae*.

²⁶ PORTELA SILVA and PALLARES MÉNDEZ, «La *villa* por dentro», *passim*.

beyond) a village, are still best described as peasants (in a modal sense), even if they were richer than many of their neighbours and clearly existed above subsistence. Indeed, analysis of the tenth-century Celanova material makes it abundantly clear that the peasant stratum was made up of a diverse body of individuals, characterized by differing degrees of legal freedom and variable economic resources. What Richard Fletcher called «an intermediate and very sizeable class of free property-owners» is very noticeable to anyone who comes at these documents from an Anglo-Saxon historiographical background²⁷.

This diversity of social and economic status can be demonstrated. It was, for example, clearly possible for peasants to have been relatively wealthy at the village level, as was perhaps Framila, who was given a quarter of a house by Gondesondo in 924 in payment for support that the former had lent the latter in times of straitened circumstances (*pane et uino qui guernasti me in anno malo*)²⁸. Similarly, Fatoi and his wife Animia sold a mere eighth of their orchard to Celanova in 961, but received for this fraction *boue et uacca cum sua agnicula preciatos in XX et IIII modios, et linteo in duos modios et duos quatarios*; this was not an insubstantial payment and it obliges us to concede that the peasant couple making the sale clearly existed above the level of mere subsistence²⁹. Peasants could also be rather poor, as was, most probably, Sisulfu, who accepted an unspecified quantity of wine and food (*uino et cibaria*) from the *confessa* Gonso, in return for small parcels of land in 943³⁰. In Rabal, Foquima sold a vineyard to Celanova in 962, for which he received the relatively modest payment of *precio cibaria quatarios VII, uinum setario* ^F³¹. Examples such as that of Framila and Gondesondo might seem at first glance to be anecdotal, but their value is beyond question, because they demonstrate how communities of free peasants of unequal means looked to each other—to the social logic of the village world—to alleviate their circumstances and to overcome difficulties. This sort of activity tallies very neatly to what other scholars have encountered in their analyses of the Carolingian world and should not be dismissed as exceptional; we need to remember that this sort of activity was most unlikely to find its way into the documentary record and much of it must have been lost³².

We therefore possess indications in the documentary record that peasants relied on neighbourly assistance and cooperation, but this did not always simply take the form of providing material assistance. Ownership in common, the sharing of parcels of land, and the sale or donation of fractions of land, were strategies adopted by peasants in order to

²⁷ FLETCHER, R. *St James's Catapult: the life and time of Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela*. Oxford, 1984, p. 14. It is difficult to accept Pastor's contention (PASTOR, *Resistencias y luchas*, p. 37) that charters show «la existencia de una igualdad interna en el seno de pequeñas comunidades aldeanas, visible por lo menos en lo que respecta a la capacidad de decisión de sus miembros». This does not sit easily, for example, with the identification of local representatives, each chosen to play their part in reaching an agreement over a boundary dispute in Cel88 (950).

²⁸ Cel22.

²⁹ Cel138.

³⁰ Cel74.

³¹ Cel147.

³² INNES, M.; COSTAMBEYS, M. and MACLEAN, S. *The Carolingian World*. Cambridge, 2011, p. 269; WICKHAM, Ch. «Rural Economy and Society». In LA ROCCA, C. *Italy in the Early Middle Ages*. Oxford, 2002, ch. 6.

expand, preserve or simply take more efficient care of their landed holdings, and they seem to have been part of the ebb and flow of village life in tenth-century Galicia; quite apart from the obvious complexity of some peasant landholding arrangements, entering into agreements such as these with neighbours or friends may also have had gestural significance³³. This may help to provide a context for the sale made to Celanova by Ermegoto and his children of their part of a vineyard they jointly owned with Baltario in Rabal; in a similar deal, Ganoi and his children were involved in a comparable arrangement with Ermigio, also in Rabal³⁴. These peasants were clearly active in private transactions which nonetheless demonstrate that they were not socially isolated, and that, as Chris Wickham has argued in an Italian context, they «acted in informal groups of friends and neighbours, [and] sought the help of patrons»³⁵.

Peasants also cooperated or collaborated with their families or neighbours in different ways. In 961, Justino acted with his wife Onosinda on behalf of his sister María, selling *terras et pumares* to Rosendo and Celanova (*Ego Iustono et uxori mee, ad vice de iermana nostra Maria, uobis patri nostri domni Rudesindi episcopi et fratribus monasterii Cellenoue*)³⁶. Similarly, Menegundia and Adaulfo represented absent family members when making a sale to abbot Fafila and monastery *in locum Sancti Vincenti*, (*Menegundia a mea persona et de mea sobrina nomine Godina*) and (*Adaulfiz a persona de meos neptos duos*)³⁷. Flamila, on the other hand, gave to her sister (*germana mea Clixouara, cognomento Gotina*) much of the property that she had inherited from her mother and her husband, with the exception of the one estate which she had already alienated to someone else (*exceptis uilla de Pontelias quam dedi ad Salamiro*)³⁸. These examples suggest that inter-communal horizontal links between peasants existed and that options were open to peasants in at least some moments when it came to deciding how and to whom they ought to divide their assets³⁹.

³³ Wendy Davies cites numerous examples, many drawn from the Celanova cartulary, in DAVIES, *Acts of Giving*, ch. 3.

³⁴ Cel145 (962): *uenderemus uobis uinea nostra propria que habeo in uilla que dicunt Rauanal, ipsa uinea que habeo cum Baltario per medio*; Cel128 (960): *ipsa uinea que cum Ermigio habeo per medio*.

³⁵ WICKHAM, «Rural Economy and Society», p. 140.

³⁶ Cel136.

³⁷ Cel119 (957).

³⁸ Cel158 (963).

³⁹ People also knew where their neighbours lived and worked and used this information in order to delineate with greater precision the location of their landed holdings. This is abundantly clear from the Celanova documentation and I shall therefore cite only two examples here to illustrate this. Cel131 (961) shows Gontemiro and his wife Egilo describe their plot (*terram nostram*) in Rabal in relation to the position of other individuals' holdings (*in agro que dicunt Brunieto, inter larea Gundesindi et circa larea de Todesinda*). Another example is from a later period but is even more explicit and shows Gamiro make a compensation payment to abbot Aloito of Celanova, in which the following description is given *Levat se ipsa uilla de aqua que discurrit de casa de Adulfo Salamiriz*. For the document, which postdates the charters edited in the edition of the Celanova documents primarily used here, one needs to consult the edition of the *Tombo of Celanova* undertaken by ANDRADE CERNADAS, J. M.. *O Tombo de Celanova*. Santiago de Compostela, 2005. These documents are not listed chronologically in Andrade Cernadas's edition, but rather follow their appearance within the *Tombo*, meaning that the document in question is Andrade10 (1030).

It is logical to assume that the unequal distribution of resources at the village level led to social inequalities within this environment; social hierarchy is in fact likely to have been a recognizable feature of Galician rural society since at least the Roman period. But historians and social anthropologists working on other periods and societies have drawn our attention to communities, sometimes characterized by sharp internal hierarchies, in which social remediation among poorer elements was primarily the business of people from this same stratum⁴⁰. It is therefore vital to recognize that peasants could and did act independently of elite pressure, and that their interests were not always subservient to elite interference. «Lords», in tenth-century Galicia, as elsewhere, «could not control the detail of peasants' lives», and we ought not to be surprised by this; whether lords would have always enjoyed sufficient sustained interest in, or proximity to, the village world to be able to implicate themselves in problem solving or the petty squabbles of the *campesinado* is not at all clear⁴¹. In these circumstances, it is no surprise that individuals or couples sometimes rose to prominence from *within* the village world and went on to amass significant landed holdings and to take on semi-official roles of regulation and arbitration, especially in light of the fact that clearly defined public structures were often absent or rudimentary, and social structures still sufficiently fluid so as to allow for the emergence of local players⁴².

2 SOCIAL STRUCTURES WITHIN THE VILLAGE WORLD

«For the majority throughout history, familial relations have been intermeshed with the structures of work»⁴³.

The majority of the peasants that we glimpse in the tenth-century Celanova charters can be described as *pequeños propietarios*, but this designation need not imply nor reinforce the connotations it maintains in much Spanish historiography⁴⁴. Wendy Davies has shown in convincing fashion that the hundreds of cases we have of peasant transaction from across the northern peninsula testify to the centrality of the peasant landowner in most areas⁴⁵. If we take Galician villages as an example, we can see that this

⁴⁰ DYER, Ch. «Did the rich really help the poor in medieval England?». In *Ricos y pobres: Opulencia y desarraigo en el Occidente medieval*. Pamplona, 2011, pp. 307-322 at p. 321: «insufficient attention is paid to the help that the poor received from their neighbours. There is good evidence from other periods and societies that those with the least resources were more likely than the rich to help people like themselves».

⁴¹ WICKHAM, Ch. *Community and Clientele in Twelfth-Century Tuscany*. Oxford, 1998, p. 205.

⁴² The best example of this phenomenon that I have encountered from across the northern peninsula is that of Bagaudano and Faquilona whose frequent purchases of land and intermarriage with other village-level notables in the early tenth-century Liébana is well known. For the notion that their authority may have translated into something resembling regulation of the village world, see PORTASS, «The Contours and Contexts», pp. 12-13.

⁴³ THOMPSON, E. P. «Happy Families». In THOMPSON, E. P. *Making History: Writings on History and Culture*. New York, 1994, pp. 299-309, at p. 307.

⁴⁴ Its resonance within conservative historiography of a Castilianizing bent is very great indeed; see SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ, C. «Pequeños propietarios libres en el reino asturleonés». *Agricultura e mondo rurale in Occidente nell'Alto Medioevo: 22-28 aprile, 1965. XIII Settimana di Studio*. Spoleto, 1966, pp. 183-222.

⁴⁵ DAVIES, *Acts of Giving*, passim.

was not a landscape of recent social (and indeed, physical) «construction» and that, on the contrary, one encounters numerous references to land or property which has been passed down from grandparents to parents⁴⁶. In short, private property and its place in the social fabric was important to villagers and it was often handed down from one generation to the next; these same references also imply that the family was the essential work-unit for peasant owners, and was perhaps more important than wider kin groups, which are hard to trace in tenth-century Celanova charters.

As we have seen, the practice of acting in unison with, or on behalf of, a family member, as well as sharing and dividing landed assets among friends and neighbours at opportune moments, were mechanisms which extended ties of patronage and consolidated peasant interests at the level of the family group or household⁴⁷. But such activity meant that peasants had to take great care to commit the physical features of this world to memory, in order to be able to negotiate its changing contours, as individuals or families variously bought, sold, or gave away property⁴⁸. Recognizing as much draws our attention to the fact that one of the more striking features of the tenth-century Celanova documentation is the preponderance of long-lasting independent peasantries whose social identity and experience was primarily shaped by their interactions with family, neighbours and landscape. Rural cultivation, based around the building block of the family household unit, seems to have taken place alongside some small-scale artisanal activity, in a landscape consisting of densely packed arable of variable dimensions⁴⁹.

Occasionally, the charters also shine a light on peasant dues, and tenurial relationships of various kinds seem to have existed alongside outright peasant ownership of land, although we can rarely be sure of the exact conditions of these relationships given the general lack of clear contractual obligations in the written record, which is itself perhaps not without significance⁵⁰. Although there has been much debate about the tenth-century origins of entrenched tied dependence and hostile lordly intrusion onto peasant communities, such phenomena are simply not features of the tenth-century Celanova documentation, and disputes known in Spanish historiography as *pleitos* perhaps tell us less about class conflict than they do about the relatively informal, but not for that reason unstructured, mechanisms of dispute settlement to which peasants had recourse – mechanisms, indeed, which may have retained their informality precisely because *de facto* class antagonism was underdeveloped⁵¹.

⁴⁶ Cel137 (961): *uenderemus uobis uinea nostra propia, quod habemus de parentorum nostrorum*; Cel117 (956): *hereditatem que habemus de mater nostra Itilo et de auios nostros*; as late as 1034, this was still the case, as Andrade³⁹ makes clear: *de uilla nostra propia quam abuimos de iuri nostro de auii*.

⁴⁷ DAVIES, *Acts of Giving*, ch.3. In Galicia, this often took the form of *incommuniatio*, which was designed to include another body within the group of sharers.

⁴⁸ This helps us to account for descriptions such as, from Cel152 (962), *uinea nostra propia quod habemus in uilla que dicunt Rauanal, subtus castro que dicunt Pelosino, territorio Arnogie, in locum predictum est ipsa uinea super domum meam*; or, from Cel137 (961), *in locum predictum circa uia de uereda et de alia parte circa uinea de Mirus presbiter*.

⁴⁹ Artisanal activity is hinted at in the witness list of Cel136 (961), which includes *Summiro, ferrario, ts*.

⁵⁰ Cel126 (959) and Cel272 (1004).

⁵¹ PASTOR, *Resistencias y luchas*, for whom lordly intrusion was «indiscutible a partir del siglo x», p. 37; MÍNGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ, J. M.ª. «Ruptura social e implantación del feudalismo en el noroeste peninsular

It is certainly the case that the rural world of tenth-century Galicia is in many ways remarkably unstructured, and institutions at the peasant level are very hard to discern. Of especial interest is the fact that even the wealthiest members of village society do not seem to have enjoyed formally recognized political authority of any sort amongst their peers, with very few references in the documents even to «good men»⁵². Popular assemblies were not frequent in Galicia, although references imply that gatherings may have taken place from time to time. For example, in 955, Iermias and Gaudiosa sold to Rosendo and Celanova half of a *villa* in Quiroga, an area over which Rosendo's family held nominal political control, and the last clause of the charter informs us, in a slight variation of a standard formula, that *si aliquis homo ad irrumpendum uenerit uel uenerimus tunc infra uel infra parte nostra, que in concilio non potuerimus uindicare, pariemus uobis ipsam uillam duplatam uel quantum fuerit meliorata*⁵³. In reality, this sort of reference to a *concilium* may have had less to do with the sorts of village councils which we see in Castilian documents, and more to do with a judicial setting. The institutions of rural cultivators within the village milieu are therefore hard to pin down; indeed, tending to, preserving and passing on private property seems to have been a much more pressing concern for village inhabitants, and it is indeed difficult to make a strong case on the back of the Celanova documents that conscious collective identity was a marked feature of tenth-century life. Given that *de facto* economic difference clearly existed from one peasant household to the next, the general lack of visible social and political organization within the village world may suggest that peasants did not feel impelled to form such associations, which has serious implications for our acceptance of the concept of steadily growing pressure «from above».

Even if we concede that peasant society was largely composed of peasant cultivators who owned and farmed their own land and lived in small family groups, this does not mean that society was in any way homogenous. Having never been subject to prolonged political control at the hands of al-Andalus, Galicia has managed to escape the more extreme characterizations of the depopulation thesis, but attempts to characterize the rural population have tended to compensate for this supposed continuity by emphasizing the

(siglos VIII–X)». *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 1985, vol. 3, pp. 7-32, for whom, «el sometimiento del campesinado... se hace perceptible desde las primeras décadas del siglo X», at p. 32.

⁵² On these occasions, the contextual situations in which «good men» are described are often far from clear. «Good men», classically *boni homines*, we might expect to be drawn from village elites, but it is interesting that they appear alongside nobles or court officials. For example, Cel86 (950), a court case between Rosendo and the inhabitants of four villages, explicitly states that palace officials have been entrusted with the case (*Venerunt ibidem ex ducibus uel proceres palatii... uel aliorum bonorum hominum non modica multitudine*). Cel88 (950), a charter documenting the delimitation of village boundaries, mentions «good men» in a context which may indicate the involvement of villagers, as I mention above in footnote 27 (*Pro ipsa contemptione inprimis perduxerunt ibidem Nepotianus Menendiz, Gaidus Astruariz et cum eis alii pluri filii bonorum hominum, ipsi qui ordinati sunt a principe antiquo comprobare*).

⁵³ Cel109. Many examples are ambiguous and the word *concilium* seems to me to be too readily accepted as an assembly without enough consideration of the context in which it appears in the document. Occasionally, we see less problematic references which allow us to imagine that village inhabitants were present at a popular assembly of some sort, such as that found in Cel88 (950) (*et cum eis omni concilio multitudo plurima*).

role of the slave in the socio-economic formation of early medieval Galicia⁵⁴. Certainly, terminology evidenced in the charters seems to suggest servile dependence of some sort existed in tenth-century Galicia; *homines* (although it is often forgotten that this need not mean slave), *mancipia*, and *servi* all feature in the documents, but it is a harder task to untangle the many associations and implications of these words (and in the process describe the economic or legal reality behind them).

The work of Isla Frez has shown how the term *servus* had come to mean «una diversidad de realidades» by the tenth century, ranging from the domestic servants of an aristocratic household –such as Muzalha, awarded *ciuium romanorum* by Rosendo of Celanova in 943– to a description of «aquel que, hereditariamente, se encuentra *ad deseruiendum*, es decir, realiza cualquier tipo de servicio»⁵⁵. Wendy Davies has also shown that the lived social experiences encompassed by servile status in the early medieval age were probably wide-ranging and remain far from clear to us⁵⁶. Furthermore, a compelling reason to remain cautious when we come to imagine the «weight» of slavery in tenth-century Galicia has to do with the context of the appearance of *servi* in the charters, many of whom are linked to the grand aristocratic families of the region⁵⁷. These *servi* may well have been workers tied to Celanova's estates who undertook arduous menial tasks and shared some aspects of the social experience of slaves from earlier ages. Various roles are made clear in inventories preserved in the Celanova cartulary; these were, by way of example, the *pistores*, *porqueros* and female kitchen staff (*mulieres de quoquina*)⁵⁸. But where slaves, or at least those designated *servi* existed (for it is clear there existed some), it is surely not surprising that they are attached to either Celanova itself or estates linked to the region's most powerful families, given that it was these environments which would have needed dependent labour⁵⁹. Indeed an important caveat suggests itself at this juncture, for if we see *homines* invariably tied to atypically wealthy families or institutions it is legitimate to ask whether we should expect this to be typical. This becomes clearer still when we compare these ambiguous documentary references to *servos* and *homines* in the tenth-century documents to the evidence for free peasant proprietors cited above; for example, if we take the example of Rabal to be broadly representative of wider social patterns, it is suggestive that there is not a single *servus* to be found in the documentation, and yet dozens of named peasant proprietors exercising the right to sell parts of their

⁵⁴ SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ, *Despoblación*, pp. 253-291.

⁵⁵ For Muzalha, Cel76. ISLA FREZ, A. *La sociedad gallega en la Alta Edad Media*. Madrid, 1992, pp. 203-214. The award of Roman citizenship is interesting for what it says about conceptions of personal and legalistic identity.

⁵⁶ DAVIES, W. «On servile status in the early Middle Ages». In BUSH, M. (ed.). *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*. London, 1996, pp. 225-246.

⁵⁷ Cel6 (886) describes a donation to the king of *villae* and includes the transfer of ownership of some *servos*; Cel12 (916) shows Count Gutier Menéndez making a donation to his wife Ilduara of *servos vel origine maurorum*, perhaps war captives. In a large donation to Celanova from the noblewoman Adosinda Gutiérrez and her husband Jimeno Díaz, we see provisions being made for the liberation of their *servos* (*si nobis evenerit mors ut non obiemus servos nostros ingenuare, maneat vobis licitum ad vicem persone nostre ingenuandi illos*).

⁵⁸ Cel183 (977).

⁵⁹ For more on the regions grandest families, see PALLARES MÉNDEZ, *Ilduara*; ISLA FREZ, *La sociedad gallega*; and SÁEZ, E. «Los ascendientes de San Rosendo». *Hispania*, 1948, vol. 8, pp. 3-76 and pp. 179-233.

land for profit are unmistakably delineated⁶⁰. There are thus insufficient grounds to claim that slave labour (or the more plausible «servile» labour) best characterized the socio-economic structure of tenth-century Galicia where the small peasant proprietor clearly owned and farmed his own lands throughout the tenth century and into the eleventh. Servile and non-servile dependence must therefore have coexisted with free peasant proprietorship with *nuances of degree* found everywhere.

3 RABAL: THE DYNAMICS OF THE LAND MARKET

Also forming part of this small world, composed primarily of peasants of mixed and highly variable social and economic status, were the agents of Celanova⁶¹. The number of documents which record dealings with villagers from Rabal, in conjunction with the fact that two or three documents seem to suggest that multiple items of business were done (or at least recorded) on the same day, gives the impression that Celanova's agents were rather a frequent and active presence in the village⁶². Monastic lordship has a well-established presence in Spanish historical writing, but many of the phenomena traditionally singled out and defended as examples of the intrusion of monastic institutions upon peasant freedoms (commonly said to have tenth-century roots), are not as transparent as the historiography implies; it is this aspect of the village world that I shall now discuss, my aim being to focus attention on the range of experience that characterized peasant life in the tenth century⁶³.

In 989, Adaulfo and Goto reached an agreement with Celanova that they would surrender their rights to a vineyard because of their inability to meet an already established agreement of payment; this was not by definition a rent, but rather a borrowed sum called a *renovo* in the sources, which we might presume was lent to this couple in order to alleviate hardship⁶⁴. Seen in this light, it is perhaps not surprising that the *renovo* represents one of many charges, rents, or compensations which are thought by some historians to represent mechanisms of lordly incursion onto peasant freeholding⁶⁵. To

⁶⁰ Precise figures are hard to arrive at because sometimes the same name appears in more than one document in contexts which do not make it clear whether the same person or two separate people who share the name are appearing in the documents in question.

⁶¹ The monastery is approximately 10 kilometres from Rabal.

⁶² Cel130, Cel131, Cel132, and Cel134 (all made on 14 March 961). Cel135, Cel136, and Cel137 were all made on 3 April 961.

⁶³ ANDRADE CERNADAS, *El monacato*, pp. 77-79. CARZOLIO DE ROSSI, «La constitución y organización».

⁶⁴ GARCÍA DE VALDEAVELLANO, L. «El *renovo*. Notas y documentos sobre los préstamos usurarios en el reino astur-leonés». *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 1973, vol. 57-58, pp. 408-448. The document is Cel211.

⁶⁵ CARZOLIO DE ROSSI, «La constitución y organización», at p. 23. For her, the *renovo*, like the phenomenon of *incommuniatio*, is an example of what she collectively terms 'donaciones y ventas forzadas y condicionadas'. The period in which she primarily locates this change is the first half of the eleventh century, although she explicitly claims it to be of tenth-century origin («es notoria su incidencia entre fines del siglo x y primeras décadas del xi»), p. 23. ANDRADE CERNADAS, *El monacato*, pp. 77-79, proposes a very similar line, which I also believe to be too rigid.

these same historians, the *renovo* functioned in such a way that Celanova was increasingly able to impoverish local allodialists, from whom Celanova's agents gained great material reward when small freeholders proved unable to meet the conditions of the deal.

Nonetheless, we ought to reconsider whether the policy of *renovo* was always offered to peasants for the sole purpose of ruthlessly and quickly stripping them of their assets; much analysis of medieval social structures has emphasized that lordly predation on vulnerable peasants is a powerful and ingrained caricature that did not always accord with reality⁶⁶. In fact, the document of Adaulfo and Goto implies that the patience of the monastery had been pushed to the very limit; endless rural credit without regulation it could not realistically be expected to offer, and Adaulfo admits to paying the monastery *uino de renouo que non compleui per annos*, which hardly suggests that the monastery had been unduly harsh in its dealings with him, or pressed him immediately for resources he did not possess.

The *renovo* loan, at least in the tenth century, might be more accurately characterized from a different perspective: as a means with which members of tenth-century society attempted to gain rural credit. It offered material assistance to some (albeit with significant future risk), and the possibility of profit to others; in other words, it was business, and we have already seen that transactional activity was not restricted to elites but was a normal part of village life too⁶⁷. Attached to these mechanisms of rural credit was, it would seem, a sense of the need to adhere to correct procedure too. In 999, we witness the spectacle of the monastery admonishing a local monk for unduly collecting and thus abusing the *renovo* in a way which was deemed unacceptable; in this document, the monk Gaudinas gave to Celanova *omne mea hereditate*. Gaudinas then went on to explain that *illa alia que desursum resonat do vobis pro uestris renouo que ego obtinui in uestra deganea de Sancta Eolalia, et desperiauit illo de manus meas*. Celanova protected its rights to collect profits—of this there can be no doubt and it is unrealistic to think otherwise; but this was not some sort of systematic despoliation of the poorer elements of society, and neither was the monastery imposing its will in arbitrary fashion when engaged in this sort of business. Rather, we might think that the *renovo* was an attempt to lend order to business relationships between the monastery and the world of rural cultivators, many of whose inhabitants may have relied on the material assistance of the monastery, and seen this latter as a natural beacon of authority, of the sort that exist in almost all human societies⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ INNES, COSTAMBEYS and MACLEAN, *The Carolingian World*, p. 268; for an interesting and entirely different take to that adopted in most scholarship, we ought to consider KEEN, M. *The Penguin History of Medieval Europe*. London, 1968: «It could be in no lord's interest to let the men who worked his lands starve, for land was more plentiful than cultivators».

⁶⁷ In the Celanova charters the incidence of the *renovo* only increases towards the beginning of the eleventh century; I have found the following examples from the tenth-century Celanova documents: Cel211 (989); Cel213 (990); Cel238 (999). Sometimes, the inability of the peasant to meet the repayments is made explicit; for example, in Cel213 (990), Ferronio stated that his transfer of land and other commodities to the monks of Celanova was made *pro quod non habui unde ipso debito complere*.

⁶⁸ We know the monastery lent assistance to some peasants in other ways. Andrade149 (1011) shows Gudesteo make a *precarium placitum* to Celanova concerning an estate *pro illa defesa que vobis meo germane Oderivo keimavit*.

Sometimes the element of risk implicit in the *renovo* clearly came back to have deleterious effects on a peasant couple's landed holdings. This seems to have been the case for Gamiro and his wife Nina, who conceded *medietatem de nostra hereditate pro vestro renovo* to Celanova in 1030; this «half» consisted of *ipsas casas, torculara, terras, vineas, pumares, figares, saltos, devesas, arbores fructuosas, montes* and more⁶⁹. Why a couple who owned so much, and must have been close to the apex of village society, would even need to take on a *renovo* agreement is not clear, but it does not appear probable that poverty drove them to access rural credit. This being the case, we ought to ask ourselves whether this example simply reflects a business deal gone wrong; in other words, this couple may have played the land market and lost⁷⁰. This is not to deny that charters which describe the *renovo* in use demonstrate economic inequality, but rather to stress that models which focus solely on exploitation risk missing the complexity and richness of the range of social action open to all members of society. Tellingly, peasant objections to new impositions (and documents from across medieval Europe suggest that it was the novelty of newly introduced dues and renders that was often considered to be particularly unjust) are not a feature of the tenth-century Celanova documents.

A complicating factor in a study of this sort is that the motivation behind peasant sales is mostly not made explicit in the texts themselves. It is true that, to some extent, peasants were at the mercy of the elements, and that a poor harvest may very well have moved some of them to sell some or all of their assets to Celanova, but although on occasions such as these sale must have been agreed with considerable reluctance, we should not assume that this was always the case wherever we see peasant sale. The monastery must also have been something of a magnet to peasants, readily available to assist with the circulation of property and goods as and when peasants themselves thought it necessary, in which case peasants may well have been relieved to have had a socio-economic entity in their immediate locality of sufficient weight so as to have been able to offer help, albeit perhaps of a conditional sort.

Whether it is even fair to talk of a «land market» is debatable in a tenth-century context, but if we accept that economic transactions were a recognizable fixture in the life-cycle of adult peasants, then it seems fair to conceive of peasants making decisions informed by their in-depth (and well-documented) knowledge of their localities –that is, of who owned what and where– to buy and sell in proactive rather than simply reactive fashion⁷¹. Moreover, although we cannot establish regular or uniform prices, or correspondence between plot size and price, it is interesting to postulate, based on my earlier analyses, whether peasants might have initiated transactional activity, at least on

⁶⁹ Andrade10 (1030).

⁷⁰ The purchase of land was deeply ingrained in these societies, as is clear from the numerous clauses which stipulate that land referred to in transactions was to be included in deals «whether inherited or bought». An example which makes this clear is Andrade19 (1036): *sic de parentella quomodo et de avolengo, sic de comparado*.

⁷¹ All discussions of this subject matter are enriched by POLANYI, K. *The Great Transformation*. New York, 1944. An indispensable collection of essays on the land market is FELLER, L. and WICKHAM, Ch. (eds.). *Le marché de la terre au Moyen Âge*. Rome, 2005. The functioning of a land market in Italian contexts can be seen in WICKHAM, *Mountains and the City*, p. 27 and pp. 232-233.

occasion; this was very probably the case, and the density of transactional activity –low by the standards of other periods– and the fact that these markets might have been shaped by social and cultural constraints or peculiarities that challenge modern notions of economic rationality, does not deflect from the significance of peasants buying and selling of their own volition. That transactions which seem to us to run counter to peasant interests were (by implication) sometimes made willingly ought not to confound us, for this phenomenon responds to social rather than strictly economic logic. For although it is true that «one does not readily transact business with enemies, and certainly not sell them anything as important as land, if one can avoid it», it is by no means clear that tenth-century villagers from Rabal conceived of socially and economically more powerful actors as enemies⁷². Taking this hypothesis further, the social antagonism inferred from the sources by many historians, may in fact be something akin to a historiographical trick of the light based on our more detailed knowledge of later periods, but it probably would have made little sense to peasants at the moment of transaction. Rather, it makes sense to imagine that the monastery was a vital source of rural credit, and perhaps sometimes a welcome partner in a world characterized by the complex and irregular patterns of the circulation of land which seem to have held sway in the Celanova region in the tenth century (and indeed, before and after)⁷³.

If peasants did sometimes sell land because they believed it to be in their strategic interest, this may explain the sale of portions of land rather than whole estates; on these occasions it is plausible that the entry into patronage networks was a secure and appealing option, and it need not imply prior hardship. It may too have been the case that medium and richer peasants could absorb the loss of some of their land and considered the support of new, well-connected and tremendously resourced patrons to be worthwhile recompense⁷⁴. By conducting deals such as these, some peasants may have entered into tenancy arrangements with lords, but not perhaps all. In any case, «lordly jurisdiction or restrictive control» was not the consequence of the Rabal deals, even for those free peasants whose *de facto* status changed as they became tenants⁷⁵.

It is of great significance that by and large the Rabal peasants did not donate to Celanova, but rather sold for profit. This is important because the social logic of gift is very different from that of sale. The practice of gift-giving has been extensively studied and it has been convincingly argued that the gift had a significant gestural resonance for both those giving and receiving, and that, furthermore, it in very many cases carried

⁷² A later document, Andrade17 (1036), makes it clear that sale was part of the to-and-fro of peasant existence; discussing a sale they plan to make to the prolific Vimara Cagitiz, Gracillo and his sons add the proviso *exceptis una laria de vinea quam iam vendimus ad Astrulfu*.

⁷³ Furthermore, the incidence of the *renovo* is certainly not so high in the written record from 900 to 1030 that we should assume that many peasants made recourse to this measure anyway. Further to this, we need to bear in mind that the *renovo* is precisely the sort of deal that the monastery was likely to record and keep, so the surviving documents are likely to represent a reliable proportional figure, or perhaps even an exaggerated sense of the importance of the *renovo*, because other 'less important' documents have now assuredly been lost.

⁷⁴ INNES, *State and Society*, p. 49.

⁷⁵ INNES, *State and Society*, p. 49.

with it the implied expectation of the counter-gift, be it material or spiritual (when gifts were made to churches)⁷⁶. Sales, on the other hand, were governed by a different set of expectations in that they did not merely transfer property but instead represented a more business-like exchange of assets. The exchange of items of everyday value to peasants, such as rye and apples, for example, must have been part and parcel of village life long before we first see it documented. However, Celanova must have impacted upon and altered peasant psychology because the monastery was simply so rich from its foundation (having been founded by the leading magnate family of the region) that it must have enjoyed the resources necessary to enter into *compra-venta* agreements with peasants at will. As a consequence, peasant attitudes too must have changed: why should a free peasant have alienated part of his goods or land to receive nothing tangible in return when he or she could have gained food, drink and clothes by means of sale which could have seen them through after a harsh winter?

A brief sketch such as this helps us to reframe questions commonly asked of social relations in tenth-century Spain and the implications bear consideration. For instance, if we accept that family or individual actions to retain, share, or cede rights to land were sometimes the result of strategic thinking on the part of peasants, then we need not evaluate the impact of Celanova on local society within a teleological framework which looks to explain how «feudal society» grew out of the tenth-century destruction of peasant freedom in Galicia, itself by no means a clear consequence of changing social practice in our period.

So how ought we to reflect on the broader implications of the tenth-century Celanova charters, and in particular, those pertaining to Rabal?⁷⁷ So far, I have discussed certain aspects of village life and tried to offer an account of these small worlds that affords merited weight to the dynamism of peasant social action; it now pays to begin to draw some of these observations together by trying to understand what actually happened to the individuals involved when one of Rabal's many *compraventas* took place. It is commonly assumed that the sale of land by tenth-century peasants to monasteries such as Celanova necessarily entailed the entry into tenancy of the selling party, as I have mentioned above. But it is far from clear that this was always the case⁷⁸. It does not follow that free peasants selling part of their land to Celanova –like Arias and Ermegodo in 961 (Cel134), for example– could not remain, in economic terms, free proprietors,

⁷⁶ WHITE, S. D. *Custom, Kinship and Gifts to Saints: The Laudatio Parentum in Western France, 1050–1150*. Chapel Hill, 1988; ROSENWEIN, B. *To be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049*. Ithaca, 1989.

⁷⁷ The full list of the Rabal charters from Rosendo's lifetime runs as follows: Cel117 (956); Cel118 (956); Cel128 (960); Cel129 (961); Cel130 (961); Cel131 (961); Cel132 (961); Cel133 (961); Cel134 (961); Cel135 (961); Cel136 (961); Cel137 (961); Cel138 (961); Cel139 (961); Cel140 (961); Cel143 (961); Cel145 (962); Cel146 (962); Cel147 (962); Cel148 (962); Cel149 (962); Cel150 (962); Cel151 (962); Cel152 (962); Cel162 (964); Cel163 (964); Cel173 (970); Cel178 (974). The priest sale documents are Cel135 (961) and Cel143 (961). The exchange (*contramutaremus*) is Cel178 (974).

⁷⁸ Judging from later inventories Celanova seems to have had very many *homines* which it could have put to work on land it acquired from villagers and this may have transpired on occasions when the peasant sale did not lead directly to tenancy.

even if they had less land to farm henceforth. It is manifest, nonetheless, that even those peasants that escaped economic dependence of some degree, having sold part of their land, did then have less to give away or sell or farm for themselves; this seems to me best characterized as the erosion of the scope of economic autonomy of peasants as local actors, for while one might have previously sold to one's neighbour, and bought from another, one could not entertain the possibility of buying *from* Celanova.

How then, do we explain this extensive programme of *compra-venta* in Rabal? Or, phrased differently, why did villagers keep selling parts of their assets to Celanova? One way of explaining this is to propose that the cycle of giving and receiving at the peasant level was probably a prominent part of village life before the intrusion of outside influence of a corporate sort, embodied by the purchasing campaign of Celanova, with this latter only so well documented thanks to the assiduous collection of charters undertaken by Celanova's agents, ever eager to preserve written testimony of their acquisitions. In contrast, we know relatively little about dealing between peasant parties because transactions between peasants which did not involve land that later came to rest in Celanova's property network can have been of little interest to those compiling its archive. We can be absolutely certain that it went on though, thanks to references such as that made by Arias and his wife Ermegodo, who sold an eighth of a large plot of land, which they trace back to two previous owners (*et habemus ipsa hereditate comparata de Ermesinda, id est: de hereditate que fuit de Busiana*)⁷⁹. In 961, the priest Miro made a sale to Rosendo and Celanova of, amongst other things, a vineyard, but not before tracing the sold vineyard back to the previous ownership of a certain Tructesinda, a neighbour who later made a sale of her own Rabal land to Celanova (*et fuit ipsa uinea de Tructesinda*)⁸⁰. This is hugely significant. Villagers clearly dealt amongst themselves and the «land market» was thus not a creation of Celanova; Celanova merely raised the stakes. Peasant transactions with other peasants must have taken place in less formal contexts too, and therefore have escaped the written record.

Yet the willingness with which peasants sold for profit to Celanova in the 950s and 960s should incline us to believe that there was no shortage of interested parties in the village when Celanova's agents first became attracted to the fertile lands of Rabal. This need not be an indication of peasants living on the very edge of subsistence, desperate to preserve what they could and sell in the face of increasing pressure. There is no indication of this in the documents, and it rather makes equally sound sense to think of a peasant mentality in which to sell part of one's land within the peasant pool of individual ownership of the village world was simply a normal part of daily existence. Peasants too would have owned less or more land at different times, buying and selling within the village world, with this latter phenomenon simply a characteristic of the normal ebb and flow of village existence.

⁷⁹ Cel134 (961). That this was a fairly normal social practice in the region can be deduced from similar references to other villages; for example, Ygo, an inhabitant of the *villa* of San Pedro in Quiroga, made a sale to Celanova in 960 of land described as *quantum meus pater obtinuit comparada*.

⁸⁰ The «Miro» document is Cel135; for Tructesinda's sale, see Cel173 (970).

What we see in these documents is a world of owner cultivators exchanging assets with a new corporate landowning entity on the fringes of their community. The initial impact of the foundation of the monastery was that of ever more frequent, intense, active, varied, and organized interaction between the different social groups of an already stratified society. What a sale to Celanova did was to remove the land sold in each transaction from the peasant pool of private ownership; significantly, that land was unlikely to be seen again in peasant hands once it had found its way into the property portfolio of Celanova. This is the structural economic shift of the transfer of landed wealth. Nonetheless, this need not have been the consequence of avaricious lordship on the rise, but simply, from the peasant perspective, the law of unintended consequences; feudalism as it is understood within a framework of social conflict is an unnecessary appendage to our understanding of this issue. The act of peasants freely choosing to sell part of their land to Celanova rather than being forced into sale would, after all, have resulted in the same *economic* consequence –namely, that more and more land found its way into the portfolio of the local landed interest of Celanova. Framed in this way, we can see that Celanova could have arrived at a position of economic hegemony in relation to the villagers without recourse to significant extra-economic coercion.

This must have brought about relatively significant change in some spheres, though perhaps not so much in the day to day lives of the inhabitants of the villages which Celanova came to own; they still farmed the land and most of them seem to have suffered no abuse of their legal rights at this stage. But economic realities, although only a part of the human experience, did change, because once land is given away or sold to important lay factions or monasteries, it is, in a sense, gone. There is as a result less and less land in the locality available for peasant cultivation, less and less land which belongs to the common peasant pool. Thus, it is argued here that we need to be cautious about accepting the broader sweep associated with the concept of a feudal transformation from 900 to 1100 because this risks missing a richer and more complex understanding of the development of social relations within the village world. Indeed, taking this line further, it seems to me that analyses predicated upon the *a priori* assumption that the tenth century actually explains the supposedly transformed social order of the eleventh century and beyond (that is, that if we look to the tenth century we see aspects of the eleventh in rudimentary form), are fundamentally misleading.

By way of conclusion, we ought to emphasize that studies of the internal dynamics of village communities can only ever tell one side of the story so long as they insist, to borrow a phrase from Dominique Barthelemy, to «shut out everything that was not strictly feudal» encountered in the source material⁸¹. Complicity between actors at the village level, a sense of the existence of procedures for the correction of abuse (most evident in the attempted righting of wrongs at court –not studied here but crucial to our wider understanding of social relations), action on behalf of other members of the village community, and horizontal bonds, offer fertile terrain in which to continue our

⁸¹ BARTHELEMY, D. *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*. Ithaca, 2009, ch. 1, p. 8.

investigations. Indeed there is no sign at all in the tenth-century documentation that communities were breaking part –that they reflect «una fase ya avanzada del proceso de disolución de las comunidades de aldea»– and the social order was most certainly not on the verge of crisis in the Celanova region⁸². Nonetheless, peasants were unwittingly complicit in the diminution of their own resource base and thus, their subsequent ability to shape their communities as their ancestors once had.

⁸² ÁLVAREZ BORGE, *Poder y relaciones sociales*, p. 29.